

Arts + Social Impact Explorer Fact Sheet

HEALTH & WELL-BEING

ARTS + PRISONS & REHABILITATION

OVERVIEW

The United States has 5 percent of the world's population but 25 percent of its prisoners. As we struggle to overcome the many problems associated with this reality, the arts have not only become a proven way to discuss these issues and break down barriers that divide us to find solutions, but they have also become a tool for driving successful rehabilitation programs which reduce the number of return offenders to the prison system.

Arts programs in prisons offer inmates opportunities for self-expression and self-reflection and teach valuable social and emotional life skills. Arts participation lowers racial tension and decreases disciplinary problems and recidivism.

Adult and juvenile offenders who participate in arts programs are more motivated to participate in other kinds of rehabilitation programs and more likely to report positive interactions with others.

In a time when prison populations are growing and the number of repeat offenders is at an all-time high, solutions offered by art programs in prisons could be a major factor in turning the tide.

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IMPACT POINTS

30%

FEWER PAROLE VIOLATIONS

Studies in California showed that six months after release, rates of parole violation for arts-in-corrections participants were 15 percent lower than nonparticipants. After two years, this difference climbed to 30 percent.¹

75%

FEWER INFRACTIONS

In a California study, 75 percent of program participants had fewer disciplinary infractions than nonparticipants.²

IMPROVED RELATIONSHIPS, BETTER COMMUNICATION, LOWER RACIAL TENSION

Participation in arts programs improves inmates' ability to understand their own emotions, feel safe expressing themselves, and communicate effectively, all key factors in rehabilitation. Participants also reported lowered racial tension and improved relationships with each other and with guards.³

ARTS IMPROVE SOCIAL SKILLS BY 25-39%

Youth participating in arts programs show significant improvement in social and emotional learning skills, like conflict resolution, future orientation, critical response, and career readiness. Youth participants measured 25-39 percent higher on these key skills after completing the program.⁴

ARTS LEAD TO 50%+ INCREASE IN PARTICIPATION

More than half of arts-in-corrections participants in a California study reported that the self-confidence they gained in the arts programs motivated them to participate in other educational and vocational opportunities.⁵

EXAMPLES OF PRACTICE

Arts in Prison, Overland Park, KS



Through arts education and arts experiences, Arts in Prison gives inmates a chance for self-reflection and an opportunity to create. A positive experience leads to hope and to the belief that they will get out of prison and lead positive lives.

<http://www.artsinprison.org>

image: The East Hill Singers is a unique, internationally known prison chorus located at Lansing Correctional Facility in Lansing, KS.

Each One Reach One, San Francisco, CA



Each One Reach One uses mentor-based performing arts, academic tutoring, and life skills workshops to break the cycle of violence, change the image incarcerated youth have of themselves, and divert them from a life in prison to become productive community members.

<http://www.eoro.org>
info@eoro.org

image: Young women rehearse an upcoming play at Each One Reach One in San Francisco, CA

PEN Prison Writing Program, New York, NY



The program provides inmates with writing teachers and mentors and promotes their work publicly through literary publications and readings. It provides a place for inmates to express themselves and encourages the use of the written word as a legitimate form of power.

pen.org/about/programs/prison-writing
info@pen.org

image: PEN America sponsor PEN America Writing for Justice Fellowship to catalyze public debate about mass incarceration

Prison Creative Arts Project (PCAP), Ann Arbor, MI



Housed in the University of Michigan, PCAP works with community members both inside and outside prisons to engage in writing, visual, and performing arts workshops. It hosts a prisoner art exhibition and publishes a literary journal of writing by incarcerated authors.

arts.umich.edu/orgs-projects/prison-creative-arts-project-pcap

pcapinfo@umich.edu

image: Formerly incarcerated artists sharing their experiences with gallery visitors at the Artist Panel at the exhibition of Art by Michigan Prisoners, moderated by PCAP Curator Charlie Michaels. Photo by Scott Tompkins.

Shakespeare Behind Bars, Macatawa, MI



Shakespeare Behind Bars is a prison theater troupe working with adult and juvenile inmates in Kentucky and Michigan. It offers programs with personal and social issues to incarcerated and post-incarcerated community members, teaching them life skills to ensure their reintegration into society.

<http://www.shakespearebehindbars.org>
info@shakespearebehindbars.org

image: *Julius Caesar*, 2017, directed by Matt Wallace. Inmate cast at Luther Lockett Correctional Complex. Photo by Holly Stone. Courtesy of Shakespeare Behind Bars.

top image: Project PAINT class at Donovan State Prison; July 2015., Photo by Peter Merts (<https://tritonmag.com/beauty-behind-bars/>)

REFERENCES

1. California Department of Corrections, n.d.
2. Brewster, L. (1983). An Evaluation of the Arts-in-Corrections Program of the California Department of Corrections [Electronic version]. Santa Cruz, CA: William James Association. Retrieved 25 February 2018 from www.williamjamesassociation.org/reports/Brewster_report_full.pdf
3. Brewster, L., William James Association, & California Lawyers for the Arts. (2017). Arts-in-Corrections: County Jails Project [Electronic version]. California Lawyers for the Arts. Retrieved 25 February 2018 from calawyersforthearts.org/uploads/2/1/4/4/21445988/clacountyjailsprojectreportjanuary2017.pdf
4. Chicago Community Trust. (2015). Arts Infusion Initiative, 2010–15: Evaluation Report [Electronic version]. Chicago: Chicago Community Trust. Retrieved 25 February 2018 from nationalguild.org/getattachment/Programs/Information-Resources---Publications/Publications/Arts-Infusion/Arts-Infusion-Initiative.pdf.aspx?ext=.pdf



READING LIST

California Prison Arts: a Quantitative Evaluation



A comprehensive study of arts programs at multiple California adult facilities.

<https://www.americansforthearts.org/node/100819>

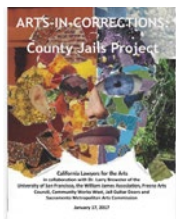
Arts Infusion Initiative Evaluation Report



The report documents the efficacy of arts interventions in juvenile facilities and with at-risk youth in Chicago.

<https://www.americansforthearts.org/node/100815>

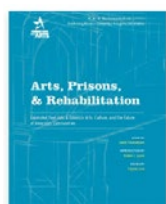
Arts in Corrections County Jails Project



The study documented the behavioral and attitudinal changes experienced by inmates who participated in arts programming while in California county jails.

<https://www.americansforthearts.org/node/100817>

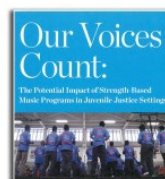
Arts, Prisons, & Rehabilitation



This essay looks at changes in the American prison system and the role that the arts may play in positively impacting those changes over the next 10–15 years. This article is an excerpt from the book *Arts & America: Arts, Culture, and the Future of American Communities*.

<https://www.americansforthearts.org/node/90691>

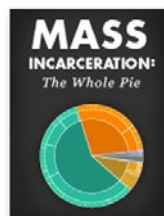
Our Voices Count: The Potential Impact of Strength-Based Music Programs in Juvenile Justice Settings



This report, commissioned by Carnegie Hall with funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, explores the implications of music integration in juvenile justice and rehabilitation.

<https://www.americansforthearts.org/node/95638>

Mass Incarceration: The Whole Pie



This report offers some clarity by piecing together this country's disparate systems of confinement to visualize real numbers and scope of incarceration in the American criminal system.

<https://www.americansforthearts.org/node/100820>

Prison Arts Resource Project: An Annotated Bibliography



This report is an annotated bibliography of evidence-based research into U.S. correctional arts programs.

<https://www.americansforthearts.org/node/100823>

top image: Actors' Gang Prison Project, photo by Peter Merts

REFERENCES (CONTINUED)

5. Brewster, L. (2014, January). California Prison Arts: a Quantitative Evaluation [Electronic version]. (Available from California Lawyers for the Arts). Retrieved 25 February 2018 from https://www.calawyersforthearts.org/uploads/2/1/4/4/21445988/larry_brewster--california_prison_arts_evaluation--jan_2014.pdf



ORGANIZATIONS

Arts for Youth Incarceration Network (AIYN)

A California-based interdisciplinary collaborative that provides exceptional arts programming in order to build resiliency and wellness, eliminate recidivism, and transform the juvenile justice system.

<http://aiynetwork.org/>

Prison Arts Coalition

The Prison Arts Coalition is a national network providing information and resources for people creating art in and around the U.S. prison system.

<https://theprisonartscoalition.com/>

Create Justice

An initiative led by Carnegie Hall and the Arts for Incarcerated Youth Network in Los Angeles, Create Justice brings together a diverse group of artists, young people, policymakers, funders, nonprofits, and researchers from across the country to share ideas and work side-by-side to leverage the power of the arts for youth justice and reform.

<https://www.carnegiehall.org/Education/Social-Impact/Create-Justice>

Arts-in-Corrections/ California Arts Council

Arts-In-Corrections, an initiative of the California Arts Council, provides arts programming in all state-run prisons in California. This website is a useful resource for program examples and research links.

<http://arts.ca.gov/initiatives/aic.php>

Prison Policy Initiative

A nonprofit, non-partisan organization that produces cutting edge research to expose the broader harm of mass criminalization, and then sparks advocacy campaigns to create a more just society.

<https://www.prisonpolicy.org/>

top image: *Julius Caesar*, 2017, directed by Matt Wallace. Inmate cast at Luther Luckett Correctional Complex. Photo by Holly Stone. Courtesy of Shakespeare Behind Bars.

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